

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SERVICES

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Background

Internal communication is a key criteria in determining the ability of an organisation to develop.

The purpose of the SAS Communications Policy is to improve internal communications by providing a framework which :-

- i) encourages individuals to connect with others at different levels,
- ii) invites qualitative two-way communication
- iii) enables staff to be easily able to access key information and be able to talk to Managers, Heads of Department and the Registrar.

The Policy relies on the visibility of managers who are responsible for ensuring that staff have access to specific information, and have the ability to engage and motivate when talking to staff.

Preface

This policy, which is the responsibility of the Registrar, sets out the framework for internal communication amongst staff within Student and Academic Services.

The policy is intended to promote communication in an environment of fluid change. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that communication is well managed, deliberate and reliable and thus valued by staff.

Senior staff within SAS encourage openness in sharing information with colleagues and are committed to consulting with staff and students on a regular basis.

The policy recognises the need for a range of styles of communication, but encourages face-to-face communications whenever possible, as face-to-face communications are generally more effective.

Departmental Communications Policies must operate within the spirit of this policy and deliver, as a minimum, the specifics articulated in the Framework below.

Modes of Communication

While recognising the need for a range of communication types the policy positively encourages face-to-face communication whenever possible.

Electronic communication (email and the Web), should be the primary mode of written communication to staff, and IT access is made available to the widest possible number of staff. Shared IT resource will be made available for those who do not have access to a PC as a part of their everyday role.

The SAS Website (www.mmu.ac.uk/sas) should be the primary source of information about SAS and its constituent departments. Colleagues should also refer to the Change Website (www.mmu.ac.uk/change) on a frequent basis to keep themselves informed.

Principles

- a) Communication is a two way process which includes the opportunity for feedback and a commitment to listening on both sides. Feedback from staff will be encouraged at all meetings and, where appropriate, via survey and focus group activities.
- b) A commitment to communicate, in a manner which involves consultation in order to inform the decision-making process.
- c) Clear and effective communication about policy, performance and operational issues to maintain an environment in which individuals feel valued and are empowered.
- d) Clear communication should be employed to ensure consistency and reduce unnecessary duplication and rework.
- e) Effective communication leads to a shared understanding of the University's and SAS' mission and key objectives which allows decision making to be devolved.
- f) Information should be communicated in an open and accessible manner.
- g) Good communication should be structured, timely and respectful.
- i) Individuals have a responsibility to keep themselves informed.

Objectives

- a) To ensure that members of staff have the requisite operational knowledge/contextual information, to be effective in their jobs and to obtain greater job satisfaction (Operational Information).
- b) To ensure that staff know about developments in relation to University policy and key decisions (Policy Development Information).
- c) To ensure that staff are aware of initiatives and events within the University and of the performance of SAS, its constituent departments and themselves, as a benchmark for their own activities and contributions. (Progress Information to support Continuous Improvement).
- d) To ensure that managers/committees/decision takers are aware of the ideas, aspirations and concerns of staff (Staff Feed-back).
- e) To ensure that exchange of information between staff at all levels, across Student and Academic Services, is facilitated to enhance the development of a SAS-wide community and to enable the sharing of best practice. (Communication Exchange).

Outcomes

It is anticipated that the policy will have the following beneficial outcomes:-

- a) Facilitate the active sharing of news and knowledge to help build a 'SAS Community' of staff.
- b) Provide a framework to support the sharing of best practice and the provision of advice and support.
- c) Enable people to be more involved, informed and aware.
- d) Actively encourage staff networks.

Communications Framework

1. Immediate Outcomes:-

- a) All staff will be notified of how to access a copy of the SAS Mission Statement, (including Vision and Values), Equal Opportunities Policy and a summary of the University's and SAS Strategic Plan, as these documents are issued and updated.
- b) All staff will receive, or have access to, their Departmental annual operational plan or a summary of it.
- c) All staff will have a clear job description and undertake an annual Professional Development & Review meeting.
- d) All staff will have access to regular information about the Staff Development Programme.
- e) All staff will have access to either text or Website based information which will include the following:-
 - Overall profile of the University.
 - Organisational structure of the University and SAS with information about its operational framework
 - Terms and Conditions of Service
 - University policies applicable to staff
- f) All staff will have access to the Academic Regulations and Procedures of the University via the University website.
- g) All staff will have access to the University's Published Annual Report and Accounts via the University website.

- h) All staff will have information relating to the Vice Chancellor and other Senior Managers' discussion documents via the Change Website.
- i) The Registrar will provide an update about progress on the SAS Strategic Plan and key objectives/developments at intervals, no less than twice a year.
- j) Heads of Department are required to meet their staff once a term. At these meetings, staff will have the opportunity to discuss departmental strategy and other local operational performance information. It is important that these meetings are opportunities for discussion and feed-back. Questions about items that cannot be answered locally should be referred, as appropriate.
- k) Line Managers will hold team meetings on a regular basis, not less than once per month, the purpose of which is to clarify priorities, give individuals the opportunity to comment on any developmental activity they have been involved in, celebrate team successes and resolve issues.
- l) Line Managers will talk informally with staff in their teams, either individually or in groups, on, at least, a monthly basis to discuss how things are going, solicit feed-back and respond to it.

2. Future development of the framework:-

To support the Communications Policy, the following measures will be explored and, if appropriate, progressively planned, developed and implemented.

- a) Production and maintenance of a definitive e-mail contact list for SAS by department, this in turn will facilitate:-
 - Universal press releases (both SAS and Departmental)
 - Use of an e-bulletin to share good news
- b) The SAS Website will be rebranded in line with new University templates.
- c) The SAS Website will include a password protected intranet section that will be progressively developed to feature:-
 - Online discussion boards/groups
 - An area for SAS networks to communicate, develop and share good practice
 - A knowledge base
 - The facility to operate a Suggestion Scheme
- d) Publication of a regular e-newsletter (posted to the SAS website, notified by universal SAS e-mail)

- e) Subject to a University web Content Management System being introduced, colleagues will be enabled to manage content on departmental SAS web pages through appropriate development and training.
- f) Give consideration to installing Groupwise Instant Messenger on all SAS PCs

Training and Guidance

The Staff Development Programme provides training on internal communications, including the use of clear English, Committee Chairing and Personal Communication Skills (listening, speaking, questioning, sharing feed-back) and ICTS offer training opportunities on email and use of the Web. These opportunities should be accessed, as necessary, in order to improve communication skills and better utilise electronic resources/software. There are a number of relevant guides on all aspects of communications available for download on the University's KnowHow website, accessible via the HR pages.